

I voted No on H.R. 4970, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2012.

Originally set up in 1994, Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) programs help prevent domestic violence and protect victims of abuse. H.R. 4970 would reauthorize funding for VAWA grant programs for five years, while making several policy changes to the Act.

On April 26, 2012, the Senate passed another version of a VAWA reauthorization bill with broad bipartisan support, by a vote of 68 – 31. There are significant differences between the House and Senate bills when it comes to protections extended to some of the most vulnerable domestic abuse victims in our society.

I wholeheartedly support VAWA programs that help keep our communities safe. Throughout my adult life, I have been a strong and consistent supporter of women's rights and organizations in Upstate New York that aid women, especially those most vulnerable in our community. In hearing from service providers, women's groups, and victim advocates in Upstate New York, it was clear that those on the front lines prefer provisions of the bill advanced in the Senate.

While I ultimately could not support it, I appreciate the effort my House colleagues put into this bill. I am hopeful that during the upcoming House-Senate conference committee a bipartisan agreement can be reached on reauthorizing these important programs. I look forward to supporting a bill that gives our law enforcement and service providers – and most importantly victims – all the tools and resources they need to ensure justice and recover from abuse.

The bill was approved by a vote of 222 – 205.